

Leaver⁵⁻³⁹⁻⁵ in Chile:

There are indications that Chile's military rulers may be contemplating the release of some of the thousands of persons still held for political reasons a year after the overthrow of President Salvador Allende. Nothing could do more to improve the international standing of Gen. Augusto Pinochet's Government.

Chile is badly in need of the goodwill it could gain abroad by freeing such prominent figures in the Allende Government as former Foreign Minister Clodomiro Almeyda and former Ambassador to Washington Orlando Letelier to accept academic appointments awaiting them in this country. No charges were ever filed against either.

Chile's international image remains acutely in need of repair in the face of eleven complaints filed last month by the Human Rights Commission of the Organization of American States. In addition, there is evidence that two backers of Dr. Allende were summarily executed in August. The Government is said to be investigating the deaths, reported by Joseph Novitski of The Washington Post—a dispatch that evidently led to a brief house arrest of Mr. Novitski and a threat to expel him from Chile. Authorities in Santiago, however, have not responded to the O.A.S. call for a halt to torture of prisoners.

President Pinochet has nevertheless made a conciliatory response to an appeal by leaders of Chile's four largest religious denominations—Catholic, Methodist, Lutheran, Jewish—for an end to repressive measures. The fact that the President's response was given front-page play by a Government newspaper raises hopes that some prisoners may soon be released.

Thus far, Chile's military rulers have characterized most criticism from abroad, even appeals for the release of prisoners against whom no charges had been filed, as part of a Marxist conspiracy against them. The international response to an act of genuine magnanimity, compassion and conciliation might go far to persuade them of the